TELESIK
Ukrainian Folk Tale

TELESIK

Ukrainian Folk Tale

TRANSLATED
FROM THE UKRAINIAN
BY JOHN WEIR

ILLUSTRATED
BY NINA DENISOVA

KIEV
DNIPRO PUBLISHERS 1981

Once upon a time there lived an Old Man and an Old Woman. They were well on in years already, and yet they had no children. "Who will look after us in our old age since we don't have any children?" they worried. The Old Woman began to beg the Old Man:

"Drive to the forest, husband, and cut me a bit of log, and also make a cradle. I will place that block of wood in the cradle and I will rock it. At least it will be something to divert myself with!"

At first the Old Man wouldn't do it, but the Old Woman kept begging and begging, until he agreed. He drove to the forest, cut out a block and also made a cradle... The Old Woman placed that piece of wood in the cradle and rocked it, singing:

Rock-a-bye, my Woodling,
Mother's baked a pudding,
Baked a pudding in a pot
For to feed my little tot!

She sat rocking and rocking the cradle until night fell and then went to bed. When they got up in the morning they looked — and the block of wood had turned into a baby boy! They were overjoyed, and they named their little son Telesik.

The boy kept growing and growing. He became so handsome that the Old Man and the Old Woman couldn't contain their happiness.

When he grew up, he said:

"Father, make me a golden little boat and a silver oar, and I will catch fish and feed you."

The Old Man made a golden boat and a silver oar. They carried it to the river, and Telesik got into the boat and rowed away. He went up and down the river, catching fish and giving them to the Old Man and the Old Woman. He would catch some fish, bring them in, and then row off again. His mother brought him food and said:

"Be careful, my son, and come to the bank only when I call you, but if anyone else should call, row farther away!"

She cooked breakfast for him, brought it to the river and called:

Telesik! Telesik!
Come to the river bank!
I've brought you food and drink!

Telesik heard her.

"Closer, go closer to the bank, my boat — my dear mother has brought me breakfast!"

He pulled in to the bank, ate and drank, and then he pushed off the golden boat with the silver oar and rowed away to catch fish...

But once the dragon heard how mother called Telesik, so he came to the river and began to bellow in a husky voice:

Telesik! Telesik!
Come to the river bank!
I've brought you food and drink!

Telesik heard him...

"That's not my dear mother's voice! Farther, my boat, go farther away! Farther, my boat, go farther away!"

He made a stroke with the oar and the boat skimmed away. The dragon waited and waited, and then he went away from the river.

Telesik's mother cooked lunch for him, brought it to the river bank and called:

Telesik! Telesik!
Come to the river bank!
I've brought you food and drink!

He heard her.

"Closer, go closer to the bank, my boat! My dear mother has brought me lunch!"

He rowed up to the bank, ate and drank, gave his mother the fish that he had caught, and again rowed away.

The dragon came to the river and again yelled hoarsely:

Telesik! Telesik!
Come to the river bank!
I've brought you food and drink!

But Telesik heard that it wasn't his mother's voice, so pulled on his oar:

"Farther, my boat, go farther away! Farther, my boat, go farther away!"

And the boat skimmed away.

The dragon saw he wasn't getting anywhere, so he went to the blacksmith:

"Blacksmith, blacksmith! Forge me a thin voice like Telesik's mother's."

The blacksmith did it. Then the dragon went to the river and called:

Telesik! Telesik!
Come to the river bank!
I've brought you food and drink!

Telesik thought that it was his mother.

"Closer, go closer to the bank, my boat! My dear mother has brought me food!"

He pulled in at the bank. Then the dragon quickly whisked him out of the boat and carried him to his house.

When he brought him to his house, he called:

"Dragoness Olenka, open the door!"

Olenka opened the door and the dragon entered.

"Dragoness Olenka, build a fire in the brick oven so hot

that the bricks should begin to blaze, and cook Telesik for me, while I go out and invite some guests over for a feast."

And he went away to invite the guests.

Olenka made a fire in the oven so hot that the bricks were almost blazing, and then she said:

"Sit on the shovel, Telesik, so I can put you in the oven!"

"But I don't know how," he said. "How is it done?"

"Just sit down!" said Olenka.

He put his hand on the shovel.

"Like this?" he asked.

"No, not like that! Climb all in!"

He laid his head on the shovel.

"Maybe like this?"

"No, not like that! Climb all in!"

"But how? Like this?" And he put his foot on the shovel.

"No, not like that!" said Olenka. "Not like that at all!"

"Then show me how," said Telesik, "because I don't know."

She started to show how, but she had no sooner sat on the shovel than he seized the handle and shoved her into the oven and put the lid on. Then he shut up the house, climbed an enormously tall maple tree and waited.

The dragon soon arrived with his guests.

"Dragoness Olenka, open the door!"

No reply.

"Dragoness Olenka, open the door!"

Silence.

"That wretched Olenka has gone gadding somewhere."

The dragon opened the door himself, and the guests entered and sat down at the table. The dragon set aside the lid, took the meat out of the oven, and they fell to eating. They thought it was Telesik. After they had gorged themselves, they went outside and rolled on the grass.

"I will loll and I will roll, Telesik made a tasty meal!"

And Telesik said from the maple:

"You may loll and you may roll, Olenka made a tasty meal!"

They listened... "Where is that voice coming from?" And then again:

"I will loll and I will roll, Telesik made a tasty meal!"

And Telesik chimed in again:

"You may loll and you may roll, Olenka made a tasty meal!"

"What may that be?" And they began to search and look around until they spied Telesik up on the maple tree. They rushed at the tree and began to gnaw at its trunk. They gnawed and they gnawed until they broke their teeth, but they couldn't gnaw it through. So they ran to the blacksmith:

"Blacksmith, blacksmith, forge us teeth that can gnaw through the maple tree!"

He did. And they began to gnaw again... They were close to gnawing through the trunk when a flock of geese flew overhead. Telesik begged them:

Geese, O geese, don't fly away!
Take me on your wings, I pray,
Fly me to my father's place,
Food and drink will there be found
And a yard to walk around!

But the geese said:

"Let the middle flock take you!"

Meanwhile the dragons kept gnawing and gnawing... Again a flock of geese came flying. Telesik begged:

Geese, O geese, don't fly away!
Take me on your wings, I pray,
Fly me to my father's place,
Food and drink will there be found
And a yard to walk around!

But the geese replied:

"Let the hind flock take you!"

The maple was beginning to crack already. The serpents would rest a bit, then gnaw again, rest and gnaw... Another flock of geese came flying. Telesik begged them:

Geese, O geese, don't fly away!
Take me on your wings, I pray,
Fly me to my father's place,
Food and drink will there be found
And a yard to walk around!

But they said:

"Let the one that's lagging behind take you!"

So there sat Telesik, poor fellow, with the maple due to fall at any moment and seal his doom! Then a single little goose came flying. She couldn't keep up with the flock and had barely strength enough to fly. Telesik begged:

Goose, O goose, don't fly away!
Take me on your wings, I pray,
Fly me to my father's place,
Food and drink will there be found
And a yard to walk around!

"Climb on my back!" said the goose, and so he did. But the poor thing was so tired that it flew very low. The dragon gave chase, trying to catch it, but fortunately he didn't make it. The goose brought Telesik to his home and set him down on the edge of the roof, and then walked about the yard nibbling grass.

Telesik sat on the roof and listened to what was going on inside the house. The Old Woman had baked some pies, and as she took them out of the oven, she said:

"Here's a pie for you, Old Man, and here's one for me."

"How about me?" Telesik said from outside.

Again the Old Woman took pies out of the oven, saying:

"Here's one for you, Old Man, and one for me."

"How about me?" Telesik asked again.

They heard him. What could it mean?

"Did you hear, Old Man? I thought I heard something..."

"Probably we're just hearing things," said the Old Man.

The Old Woman said again:

"A pie for you, Old Man, and a pie for me."

"How about me?" Telesik asked from the roof.

"Someone is really speaking!" said the Old Woman and she poked her head through the window — and there sat Telesik on the roof. They ran out of the house, snatched him up and brought him into the house and were so glad!...

Meanwhile the goose kept walking about the yard. The mother saw her and cried: "There's a goose walking about. I'll catch her and cook her."

But Telesik said:

"No, mother, don't kill her, but feed her! If it hadn't been for that goose, I wouldn't be here with you now."

So they fed the goose and gave her drink, and they poured some meal under her wings to carry with her on her journey. And the goose flew away.

So there's a story for you and a doughnut for me.

* * *

ТЕЛЕСИК

Украинская народная сказка

(на английском языке)

Киев, издательство «Дніпро», 1981.

Printed in the USSR

© Dnipro Publishers, 1981

Ukrainian folk tales in English translation with many colourful illustrations are regularly published by Dnipro Publishers.

Place your orders at bookstores or newsagents in your country which sell or distribute Soviet books and periodicals.

For more information on our publications write to:

Dnipro Publishers
42 Volodimirska St.
Kiev, Ukrainian SSR
USSR